Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

Spring 1990

Volume 2, Number 1

A Publication of the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

Arboretum Library
301 N. Baldwin Ave.
Arcadia, CA 91007
626-821-3213

Director Francis Ching announces his retirement

Francis Ching, Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens for the past 20 years, announced his retirement effective Mar. 31. A native of Hawaii, Mr. Ching joined the Department in 1956 after earning degrees from Michigan State University.

As Director of the Department, Mr. Ching has overseen operation of the four botanical gardens run by Los Angeles County: the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum in Arcadia, Descanso Gardens in La Canada Flintridge, South Coast Botanic Gardens on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and the Virginia Robinson Gardens in Beverly Hills.

In recognition of Mr. Ching's achievements, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors appointed him Director Emeritus. During the next eighteen months he will serve as consultant to the gardens, assisting in the completion of specific projects begun during his tenure. Assistant Director, Leon Arnold, will serve as Acting Director until a new Director is appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

Under Mr. Ching's guidance, programs at the gardens have expanded beyond the original scope of conserving, studying and displaying plants from around the world with an emphasis on those adaptable to the Southern California environment. He implemented numerous people-related programs and activities that enabled more people to share and enjoy the full value of plant life in Southern California.

Francis Ching

Success of these programs has earned Mr. Ching international recognition in his field. Last year he received the prestigious Arthur Hoyt Scott Garden and Horticulture Award from Pennsylvania's Swarthmore College. Mr. Ching is the first Californian to be so honored during the 60 year history of the award.

From 1974-84, Mr. Ching served on the Board of Directors of the American Association of Botanic Gardens and Arboreta, and as its President from 1980-82. In 1986 the AABGA named him an Honorary Life Member, the organization's highest honor.

Mr. Ching has served on the Visiting Com-

mittee of Longwood Gardens and the National Arboretum Advisory Council in Washington, D.C. He also served on the board of directors of the American Horticultural Society and the Botanical Collections Committee of the Zoological Society of San Diego. A reviewer and panelist for SUNSET magazine for over 25 years, he also served as a reviewer for the Institute of Museum Services and for the Museum Assessment Program and Accreditation programs for the American Association of Museums.

On the popular front, Mr. Ching has judged floats for the Tournament of Roses, towering floral headdresses at the Las Floristas Ball and the Easter Parade at Disneyland.

Fiesta de Flores features colorful shrubs, trees, flowers

Whether your garden lacks a butterfly-alluring bush or a flowering fruit tree, your best resource is the annual Fiesta de Flores plant sale May 19 - 20 at South Coast Botanic Garden. The annual sale features a wide range of plants, mostly trees, shrubs, and drought-tolerant varieties, for home and garden. But be forewarned. If past sales are any indication, you had better arrive early (the sale runs from 9 am to 4 pm) to get the best of the selection.

Pink floss silk trees, golden trumpet trees and vivid orange coral trees all make for a colorful array of tempting buys. River wattle trees, with their graceful weeping leaves and paired yellow puffs, and deciduous fruit trees -- peach, apricot, plum and cherry -- also top the list of trees for sale.

On a smaller scale, flowering favorites include *Buddleia* (commonly called the butterfly bush), lantana and flowering quince. Arboretum introductions of lilies of the Nile (*Agapanthus*) will color the sale in various shades of blue through purple while hybrid daylilies bloom in a wide array of colors and bicolors. Dwarf as well as full-sized bougainvillea, azaleas, lilacs, roses, gardenias, fuchsias and ferns will also be available.

And before heading home with your prized purchases, take a break to enjoy on-going cultural demonstrations, food and entertainment.

South Coast Botanic Foundation members and guests can do their Fiesta shopping early at the Preview Party May 18 from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Shoppers may also enjoy entertainment, beverages and hors d'oeuvres. Tickets are $10 per person.

Chameadorea *palms will tempt Fiesta shoppers.*

Director to speak at annual meeting

Francis Ching will share his adventures along the New Zealand Coast during the annual Arboretum Foundation meeting June 13 at 7 p.m. The meeting begins with an open house from 3 to 5 p.m. followed by dinner.

From the volcanoes in Tongariro National Park, 170 foot trees in the Waipoua Kauri Forest, to rock formations resembling great grey pancakes piled by the thousands at the Punakaiki marine reserve will be featured in his talk and slide presentation called "Plants, People and Places".

During his 20 day trip, he visited botanical gardens, including the Government Gardens in Rotorua, stopping to collect new cultivars for the Department. Mr. Ching's prized materials included tea trees (*Leptospermum*), bottlebrushes (*Callistemon*), *Metrosideros*, and *Pittosporum.*

Baldwin Bonanza XX set for May 6

Baldwin Bonanza shoppers will find thousands of bargain priced plants at this 20th annual benefit plant sale at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum May 6. The sale is open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., but many sought-after plants sell out early in the day.

Tempting trees in five gallon containers include Arboretum introductions like the 'Royalty' orchid tree and lavendar trumpet tree as well as the magnolia-like *Michelia champaca*, with its fragrant butter-yellow flowers. Other trees such as *Michelia doltsopa* with its creamy white blossoms will be available in 15 gallon containers. Arabian jasmine, anthuriums with pearly white fruit or pink blossoms, frangipani, clivia with brilliant clusters of orange, funnel-shaped flowers and other garden favorites will also be on sale.

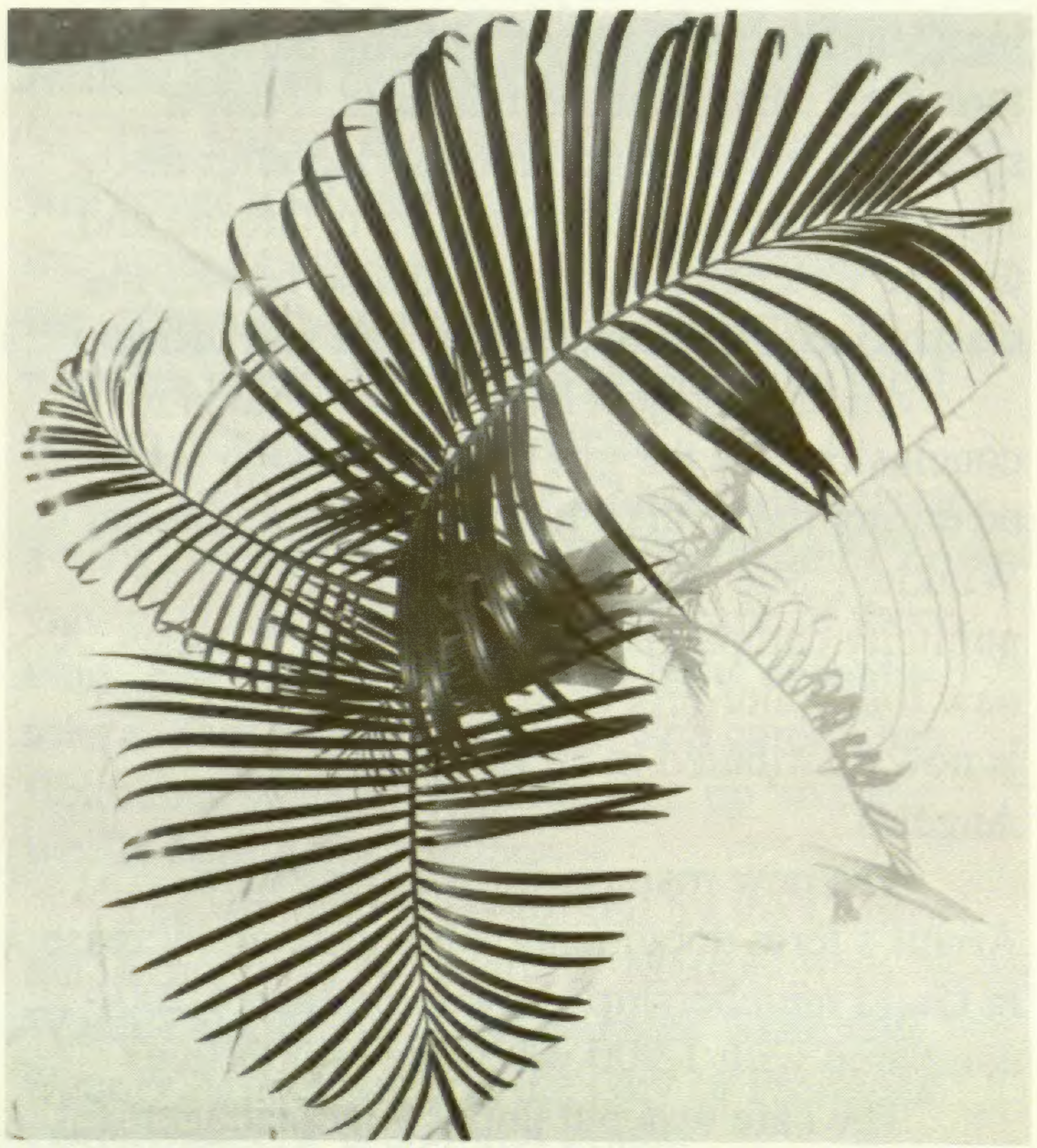
Tropical palms originally grown for a summer sale have instead been released for Baldwin Bonanza XX. Among the landscape palms seldom found in local nurseries will be fountain palms (*Livistona*) and slender climbing cane palms (*Calamus caryotoides*). Young fan-leaved loulou palms (*Pritchardia*) make ideal house plants, while species of the walking stick palm (*Linospadix*) and feather palm (*Chamaedorea*) are adaptable indoors and out.

The selection of organically grown herbs is wide enough to plant an entire herb garden. Besides rosemary and majoram, shoppers will find an international assortment of oregano--Greek, Italian and Mexican types will be available. Unusual thymes like the decorative golden thyme and the astringent lemon thyme line up beside subtle variations of mint like applemint and spearmint. To add zest to spring-time salads, buy a salad burnet plant with leaves that taste like cucumbers.

A Bonanza preview party will be held on May 5 from 4 to 7 p.m. offering the earliest chance to purchase plants. Shoppers can take time out to enjoy musical entertainment by the Promenade Brass Quintet as well as beverages and hors d'oeuvres. Preview party tickets are $5 for California Arboretum Foundation members and $12.50 for guests.

The sale is sponsored by the California Arboretum Foundation in support of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum.

Fragrant yellow flowers grace Michelia champaca.



Baldwin Bonanza will feature many tropical palms.

Mary Ann Arnett retires as Descanso Guild president

Escorting children on duck feeding expeditions to Descanso Gardens led to 20 years of volunteer service at the garden for Mary Ann Arnett. In the years since then Mrs. Arnett has witnessed and helped shape a host of improvements at Descanso Gardens.

"I first started visiting the gardens with my children and a neighbor in 1969," said the outgoing president of the Descanso Gardens Guild.

A year after those early visits, Mrs. Arnett's interest in botany prompted her to join the Guild and she was soon actively involved in the group's fund raising activities. What began as work on the forerunner of Day at Descanso committee expanded to positions as chairperson of the Red Carpet Tea committee, historian, cochairman with her husband, Jim, of the Christmas Show and election to the Board of Trustees in 1981.

As newly elected member of the Descanso Gardens board of trustees that year, Mrs. Arnett was involved in the most conspicuous recent garden addition, the building complex named after Georgia Van de Kamp.

"When I first started coming to the gardens the entrance was just a funny little building (Manchester Boddy's milking barn) with a turnstile," Mrs. Arnett reminisces. Now a sprawling redwood complex styled after designs by early Pasadena architects Greene and Greene welcomes visitors and also houses the classrooms, gift shop, exhibit hall and offices.

Another project Mrs. Arnett guided to conclusion was the gift shop expansion started during the term of her predecessor, Gloria Winkley. She also supervised a stepped up publicity campaign started by Mrs. Winkley. A new four-color brochure printed by the Guild is now distributed in racks all over Los Angeles.

The new roster printed during Mrs. Arnett's term documents a 100 percent increase in Guild membership--now more than 4,700--compared with 1,900 when she took office.

The cafe was put under new management and is now open daily and caters many events. Since the Guild receives 10 percent of the profits, the new arrangement has made it possible to completely computerize the Guild office and purchase a new telephone system. New carpeting and room darkening shades were installed in Van de Kamp exhibit hall and classrooms.

The Hospitality House also benefited. The interior was repainted, awnings replaced, new terrace furniture purchased and the house was rewired with matching funds from Los Angeles County.

Mary Ann Arnett

Recognition for Mrs. Arnett has been both national and local; last year she was invited to Atlanta, GA, to accept the American Horticultural Society award for the handicpped garden program at Descanso, and her name is engraved on the commemorative plaque for past presidents in the Hospitality House.

Mrs. Arnett was also involved in early phases of projects that will be completed after she hands over the gavel to the new Guild president, Gail Boatwright.

Even after she leaves the office of president, Mrs. Arnett plans to stay active in Guild activities, supporting long range projects such as the master plan adopted during her tenure. The first phase of the plan, redeveloping the lake area, begins this spring. Other plans call for renovating the rose garden and improving the entrance garden.

People, birds to benefit from new Descanso Gardens lake

Birds and people got equal consideration in plans for redeveloping the lake area at Descanso Gardens in LaCanada Flintridge. The concept of combining two existing ponds into a larger lake originated with Bill Beggs, a retired construction engineer and longtime volunteer at the public garden. Mr. Beggs is also an active member of the Audubon Society who comes to Descanso Gardens every day to feed the birds.

Steve Smith, landscape architect with Lawrence Moss & Associates, took the concept and created a lake that serves many uses. Although the site will look like a pristine natural area, the lake and its outfall are actually part of a flood control project.

"We plan to achieve the delicate balance between public needs and those of the birds," said Mr. Smith. The increased shoreline of the 1 1/2 acre lake with its central island will be an estuary for nesting and foraging waterfowl to use either year around or during migration

Garden visitors gain several viewing decks and educational exhibits that will blend into plantings around the lake.

Plants are mostly native and Australian shrubs that need a minimum of care and that will grow back quickly if damaged by the waterfowl. The shrubs and two large willows hanging over the water will enhance the existing groves of redwoods, sycamores and alders. Visitors can follow a footpath that wraps around the project and crosses a waterfall.

At the lower end of the lake, water will cascade year around over two falls separated by a natural-looking rock outcropping. In summer it will be recirculated and in winter excess rainfall will escape over the waterfalls.

The project, financed equally by Los Angeles County and $70,000 in matching funds from Descanso Gardens Guild, should be finished in time for waterfowl migrations in the fall of 1990.

"Water Management in the Landscape" set for May 19

"Creating a water-conserving garden doesn't mean cactus and special irrigation - it's a whole attitude", says Lisa Iwata. She is one of four experts who will offer homeowners tips on creating lush yet water thrifty gardens during a hands-on water conservation symposium at the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum May 19. "Water Management in the Landscape" runs from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

A registration fee of $25.00 will include a box lunch. Space is limited, so participants should register early.

Water use can be cut from one-third to one half or more with simple management techniques. By grouping them in the right part of a garden, homeowners can still grow thirsty old favorites like azaleas and camellias. Ms. Iwata, a landscape architect with Land Interactive, Inc. will share these tips and more in her talk on designing attractive gardens that minimize water use.

"People can have a lush garden without lawn or turf, for example, if they use groundcovers creatively," says Ms. Iwata. Homeowners will learn about retro-fitting, or revamping an existing garden, and see slides of endless garden design possibilities.

Dr. Peggy Mclaughlin and other speakers will cover such topics as plant selection, irrigation design and garden maintenance. In the afternoon, experts will combine the planting tips and techiques to create an ideal garden as homeowners watch.

In addition, Dr. Steve Cohan will narrate a walk through the Henry C. Soto Water Conservation Garden, a thriving landscape of more than 200 plants that are not only drought-tolerant but colorful as well. The garden has flourished without irrigation for up to three weeks during hot weather.

The seminar is sponsored by the California Arboretum Foundation, Metropolitan Water Water District, the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum and the City of Pasadena Department of Water and Power.

Francis Ching retires

20 years of accomplishments

"We are trying to make the Arboreta and Botanic Gardens a meaningful and educational experience for the general public, besides creating a nice place to visit on a Sunday afternoon."

--Francis Ching

1970--Aquatic garden completed

1973--Meadowbrook completed

1974--Virginia Robinson Gardens given to county

1975--Tropical Greenhouse completed

1976--Prehistoric & Jungle Garden completed

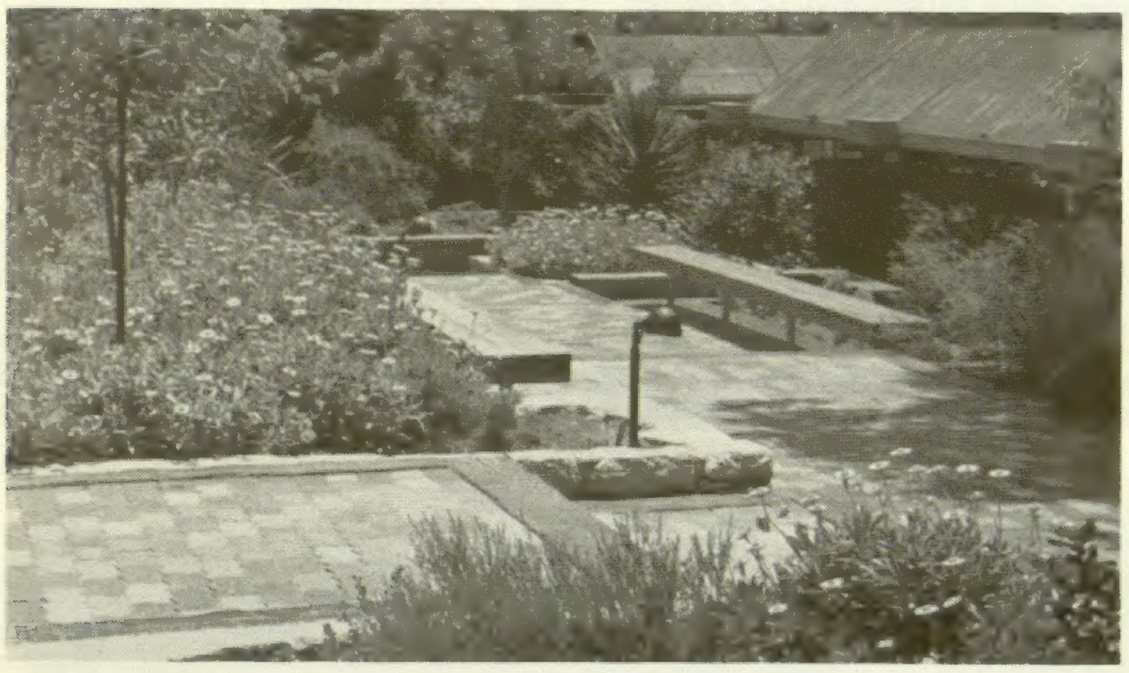
1976--South Coast Botanic Garden administrative complex dedicated

1979--First Fall Garden Fair staged

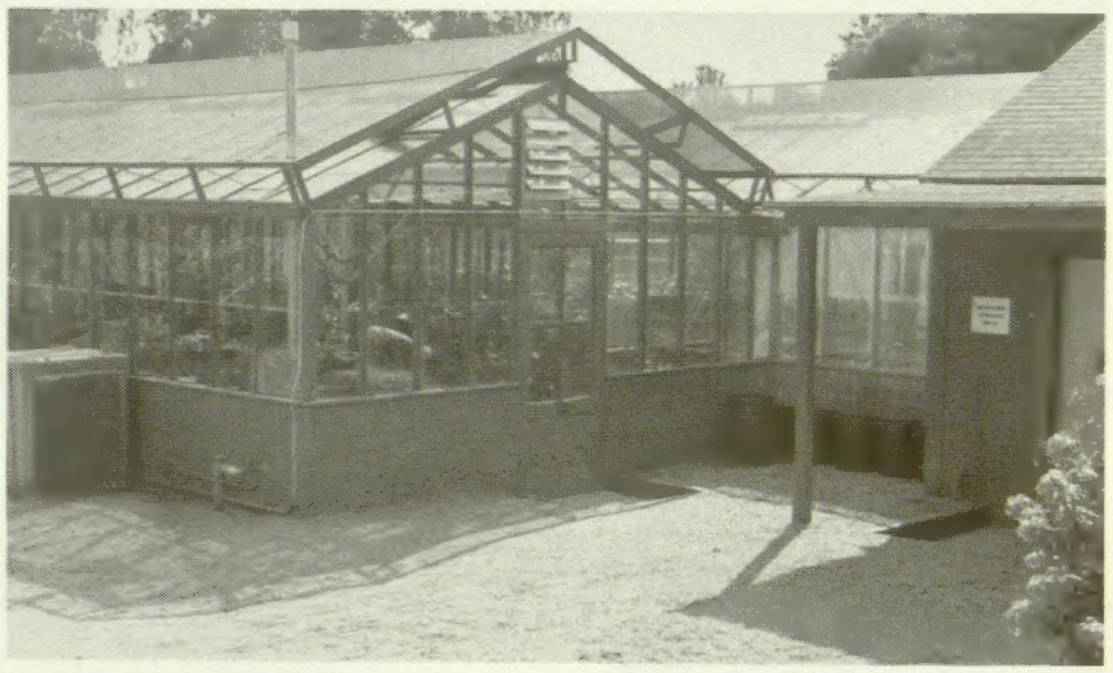
1980--Elected president, American Association of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

1981--Helen and Samuel Ayres Hall of Environmental Education dedicated

1982--Descanso Gardens complex dedicated



1985--Stairway Garden completed



1987--Air pollution display inaugurated

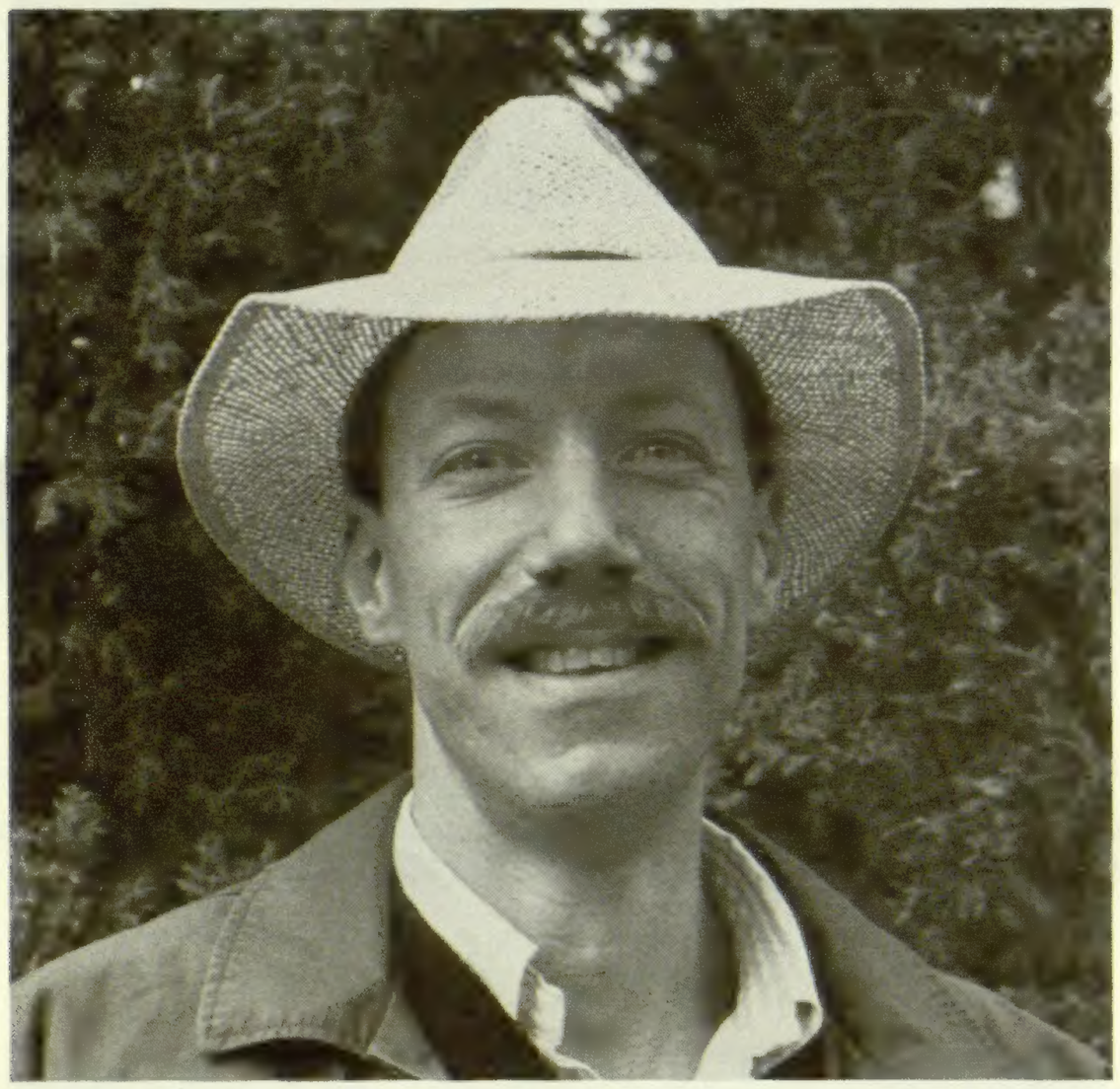
1988--Water Conservation Garden dedicated

1990--New orchid greenhouse completed

Former White House Gardener joins Department staff

Allen Howard's career path led from public gardens into the laboratory and then, last November, back outdoors when he accepted the position of biologist with the Los Angeles County Department of Arboreta and Botanic Gardens.

After earning a degree in horticulture at Delaware Valley College of Science and Agriculture, Mr. Howard joined the gardening staff at the White House in Washington, D.C. In 1982 he moved to the National Arboretum where he was assistant curator of the national bonsai collection. There he found that answering questions from an international assortment of visitors was among the most enjoyable facets of tending the Japanese garden.



Allen Howard

"People and plants are a great combination," Mr. Howard said in explaining why he prefers public horticulture.

Nevertheless, he returned to the classroom where he earned a master of science degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research there focused on plant communities and studies of native plants, progenitors of cultivated ornamental plants. An assistantship with the Urban Horticulture Institute at Cornell University lead to research on how plants respond on a cellular level to drought.

By the time he joined the Department, Mr. Howard had decided he was working at too great a distance from living gardens. He was ready to move from microscopes and plant cells to the diversity of Southern California public gardens.

With the Department, Mr. Howard functions both as a botanist and a horticulturist as he asks questions revolving around the central theme, "How does it all fit together?"

What plants are in the Department's collections? Are these collections compatible with the gardens' goals? How well are they displayed? Can the existing collections be improved in terms of content and display value? Do they fit local conditions such as climate and other environmental factors?

Some of the answers he seeks will probably surface during work in the herbarium and with other members of the research team. Even though Mr. Howard is often indoors using the computer, this newly transplanted Hancock Park resident hopes to still spend time in the field, working with growing plants and the people who visit them.

New type sod laid at Arboretum

In March the Arboretum staff laid new sod in the family garden of the Sunset Home Demostration Gardens. One of the latest in sod varieties, Dwarf Medallion Blue Grass is tough. Drought tolerant, it handles both summer and winter weather with ease and is green year-round.

The new sod, purchased from Pacific Sod Company, was grown without soil. Seeded on a plastic membrane, the roots form a lightweight mat that is easier to transplant and takes root faster.

In Memoriam

Loss of any staff member diminishes the Department, but the sudden passing of Joe Erby Jan 28 reaches beyond his colleagues, affecting people who never even knew him by name. His duties as senior gardener kept Joe out on the grounds of the Los Angeles State and County Arboretum where he became the garden's unofficial facilitator.

Joe was never too busy to help. A duckling stranded in one of the pools or a wandering child lost at dusk--he was likely to be the person who rescued them. Befuddled visitors could rely on him for accurate directions delivered with a smile. When Arboretum volunteers needed anything, their problems were quickly solved when they asked Joe. Everyone who worked with him took his cheerful presence for granted without realizing how, even when under pressure, he made everything seem easy.

He started at the Arboretum after four years of honorable service with the Marines. In his 30-year career with the Department, Joe rose through the ranks from park maintenance man helper until, in 1969, he was named Arboretum senior gardener. Joe earned degrees or special certifications in horticulture from Mt. San Antonio Community College, California Polytechnic University at Pomona and University of California Los Angeles. He also taught horticulture at Mt. SAC and UCLA.

Joe Erby

He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Mamie, and two children, Cynthia and Eric.

The California Arboretum Foundation has established a fund to purchase a garden bench for the Arboretum as a tribute to Joe from his friends. Anyone interested in contributing may contact the Foundation offices.

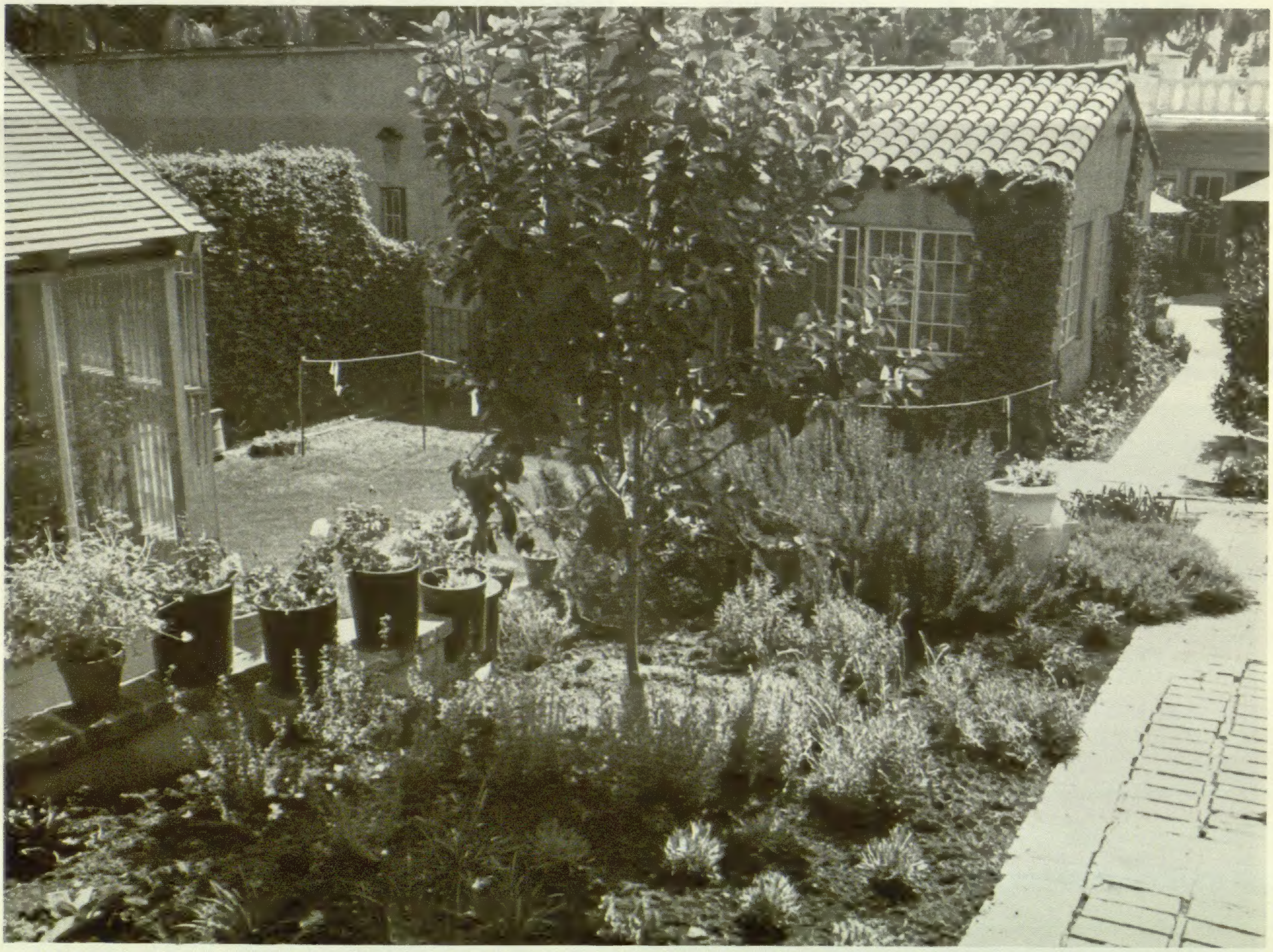
New herb garden enhances Robinson Gardens

As if Virginia Robinson Gardens did not already exude enough of an aura of romance, an enchanting new feature has been added. Initiated by the Friends of Robinson Gardens, the Garden's support group, and designed by John Copeland, Garden superintendent, a freshly planted herb garden adds new whimsy to the grounds.

Adjacent to the servant's quarters, the little garden is steeped in fragrance and color. Several hundred culinary and sweet-smelling herbs fill the roughly 700-square-foot rectangular plot.

Sage and lavendar blend with rosemary and thyme and just about every other herb one can imagine. In addition, herbs in terracotta pots spill out into the courtyard area as if enticing visitors toward the garden.

Herbs in pots entice visitors into the garden.



Herb garden adds fresh charm to an area near the servants quarters Virginia Robinson Gardens.

Department tree stars in Arbor Day "Videolog" segment

The 800 Arbor Day trees distributed to schools by the Department in 1990 all improved the urban forest, but one did it with an added bit of fanfare. Television cameras were rolling Mar. 7 as children at Ann Street School in Chinawn planted their *Tabebuia impetiginosa.*

It began when Huell Howser, host of "Videolog" on KCET, planned a story on Arbor Day celebrations. His office contacted the Department where he got a copy of the 1987 *Garden* magazine article describing how determined teachers and parents used donated trees and paint to transform a grafitti-plagued inner city school.

David Diaz, principal at Ann Street School, gave permission to film the 1990 Arbor Day ceremony and the rest, as they say, is history. Airing times for "Videolog" vary and are often repeated, so be alert for the Arbor Day segment when you watch Channel 28. You now know the origin of the starring tree.

Videolog crew with host Huell Hauser tapes ceremony.

Children in flower costumes sing original compositions honoring trees

GARDEN EVENTS

APRIL 21 - 22 — **Rose Show**
Descanso Gardens
Sat. noon to 4:30 p.m.,
Sun. 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
San Fernando Valley Rose Society's display of roses in "A Country Garden." Roses & bouquets on sale.

MAY 6 — **Baldwin Bonanza XX Plant Sale**
Arboretum
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Thousands of bargains such as colorful trees, tropical palms, herbs and summer plants.

MAY 19 — **Water Conservation Symposium**
Arboretum
9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
A homeowner's workshop on "Water Management in the Landscape." $22.50 ticket includes lunch.

MAY 19 - 20 — **Fiesta de Flores**
South Coast Botanic Garden
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Tempting trees, ferns, fuchsias, roses and more on sale. Music, refreshments and demonstrations.

JUNE 2 - 3 — **Fuchsia Show**
South Coast Botanic Garden
9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
National Fuchsia Society members will sell and show a variety of fuchsia forms.

JUNE 9 - 10 — **Arts and Crafts Faire**
Descanso Gardens
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Hand made arts and crafts on display and sale. Enjoy music, food and demonstrations.

JUNE 16 - 24 — **Bonsai Show**
Descanso Gardens
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
Descanso Bonsai Society shows tiny trees. Demonstrations each afternoon. Plants and supplies on sale.

JUNE 29 - JULY 1 — **Cactus and Succulent Show**
Arboretum
9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
The Cactus and Succulent Society of America offers thousands of plants for show and sale.

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County of Los Angeles
Department of Arboreta & Botanic Gardens
Francis Ching, Director

Los Angeles State & County Arboretum
301 N. Baldwin Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91007-2697

Descanso Gardens
1418 Descanso Drive
La Canada Flintridge, CA 91011

South Coast Botanic Garden
26300 Crenshaw Blvd.
Palos Verdes Peninsula, CA 90274

Virginia Robinson Gardens
Beverly Hills, CA 90210

ARBORETA AND BOTANIC GARDENS
is published by the
Los Angeles County Department of
Arboreta and Botanic Gardens

LuAnn B. Munns, Editor
(818) 446-8251